



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD & AGRICULTURE
NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY
2010 SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT FUNDS
REQUEST FOR CONCEPT PROPOSALS
CATALOGUE OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE (CFDA) 10.170

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) is pleased to announce a competitive solicitation process to award Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) funds for projects that enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. CDFA expects the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) to make up to \$17 million available for SCBGP grant awards.

Specialty crops are defined by USDA as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture and nursery crops (including floriculture). Please visit the USDA website at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/> to view a comprehensive list of eligible and ineligible specialty crops under the SCBGP.

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2010 SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

Purpose:

California's specialty crop agricultural and food systems are a fundamental component of our State's economy in rural, suburban, and urban areas. The U.S. specialty crops sector, which accounts for 52 percent of U.S. farm gate value, provides healthy food that every Californian needs to help fight obesity and diet-related diseases such as diabetes. California grows over 50 percent of the nation's fruits, nuts and vegetables including horticulture, which enhance quality of life.

Mission:

The mission of CDFA's SCBGP is to enhance the competitiveness of California specialty crops by creating and expanding partnerships, promoting and developing new and existing markets, reaching new consumers and ensuring the long term viability of California specialty crop agriculture. A list of projects that were selected under the SCBGP in prior years is available at the CDFA web site at: <http://cdfa.ca.gov/grants>.

TIMELINE

Phase I	January 11, 2010	Release Notice of Funding Availability – Request for Concept Proposals
	January 11-15, 2010	Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Workshop – for Workshop times and locations see the CDFA website at: http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/grants
	February 1, 2010 5:00 p.m. PDT	Concept Proposals Due
Phase II	March 25, 2010	Send Invitations to Submit Grant Proposals
	April 26, 2010 5:00 p.m. PDT	Grant Proposals Due
	July 2010	Grant Proposals to USDA for approval
Award	October/November 2010	Announce & Award Grant Agreements

ELIGIBILITY

CDFA is seeking Concept Proposals from eligible non-profit organizations, local, state and federal government entities, for-profit organizations, and universities (including private colleges and universities) for projects that solely benefit the production of and access to California specialty crops.

Those entities that are non-profit or for-profit will be required to provide either verification of their non-profit status or a copy of a valid California Business License if invited to submit a Grant Proposal.

NOTE: Grant funds will not be awarded for projects that directly benefit or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual.

FUNDING

Funding Levels:

CDFA projects that up to \$17 million will be available to award grant amounts from \$75,000 to \$500,000 per project. Grant funds cannot be expended before October 1, 2010 or after June 30, 2013.

Matching Funds and In-kind Contributions:

Matching funds and in-kind donations are not required, but are strongly encouraged. Documentation will be required in Phase II – Grant Proposal of the solicitation process. However, applicants are encouraged to develop those partnerships now and provide the estimated amount in the Concept Proposal. Cash and in-kind contributions will be weighted at the same level (no preference for cash over in-kind).

Indirect Costs:

Indirect costs may not exceed five percent (5%) of the grant award amount including subcontract funds. Indirect costs means those costs incurred for a common or joint purpose benefitting more than one cost objective, and not readily assignable to the cost objectives specifically benefitted, without effort disproportionate to the results achieved.

FUNDING AREAS

CDFA is soliciting Concept Proposals that address any of the Funding Areas described below. Also listed are Areas of Emphasis within each Funding Area which outline potential types of projects and approaches to consider.

Please note that the Areas of Emphasis are suggestions and should not be considered exclusive.

Although Concept Proposals may address multiple Funding Areas, applicants must select a single Funding Area that is the focus of their proposal. CDFA does not impose a limit on the number of applications that an applicant may submit. Eligible applicants can submit applications for multiple Concept Proposals so long as each submission represents a unique project. Each proposal must be submitted separately.

Funding Areas:

- I. Research
- II. Marketing
- III. Nutrition

I. Research

Within the Research Funding Area, there are three sub-areas, Plant Health and Pest Challenges, Environmental Concerns and Conservation and Food Safety.

A. Plant Health and Pest Challenges

Protecting California's specialty crop agriculture from the relentless invasion of exotic pests and diseases is a critical effort. California agricultural losses to exotic pests exceed \$3 billion annually. Pest and disease prevention and management programs that will effectively protect California's specialty crop agriculture and horticulture in an economically and environmentally sound manner must be implemented to prevent further losses, retain marketability of products and retain export markets. Invasive species include noxious weeds, insect pests, plant diseases, and vertebrate pests.

In this Funding Area, CDFA will consider projects that address pest and diseases that affect the production of California's specialty crops – including research related to the probability and impact of invasive pest, disease and weed threats to specialty crops and research to develop tools to detect, eradicate and control pests and disease. Projects are encouraged that address new pests or disease threats to California specialty crops, particularly pests or disease threats with significant negative potential economic impact.

Areas of Emphasis:

- Speed and reliability of detection
- Development of new tools for eradication
- Development of plants resistant to pests/disease
- Development of secondary inspection/detection capacity
- Conduct pest surveys to ascertain threat and spread of threat

- Develop pest protocol programs for a subsector of specialty crops such as nursery, wine grapes, citrus, tree nuts, etc. with relatively unique pest / disease issues. Protocols include, e.g. Best Practices/Means of Enforcement and separately address the issue of funding protocol programs. The California Leafy Green Program is an example of a type of successful industry sector program that could be adapted from food safety into the Pest Protocol arena; i.e., certificates, or a model comparable to that developed for Leafy Green Vegetables.

B. Environmental Concerns and Conservation

Agriculture has a fundamental relationship with the natural resources – land, air, and water to produce food and other ecosystem services. California’s farmers and their allied organizations are undertaking many innovative steps to improve the environmental performance of their farming operations and new stewardship opportunities are being created. Sustainability programs are becoming common in many companies and commodity groups.

In this Funding Area, CDFA is soliciting projects that enhance the conservation of agricultural land, water, habitat and biodiversity as well as proposals that address specialty crop agriculture’s contribution to adaptation and/or mitigation of climate change. Improvement of air and water quality with respect to specialty crop agriculture will also be considered.

Areas of Emphasis:

- Addressing water use efficiency not only for climate change adaptation, but also addressing current drought conditions
- Creating real time data bases showing the impact of climate change – including drought – on specialty crop production and a catalogue of efficient irrigation practices and technology linked to different types of specialty crops and micro-climates and soil types
- Integrating resource base issues; i.e. improve both air and water resources
- Addressing regulatory challenges for California’s specialty crop growers
- Assisting communities and/or decision makers in planning for specialty crop agriculture
- Assisting growers to adapt to climate change by conducting research and implementation of strategies where technologies are already available - especially water use efficiency and invasive pest detection, control and management
- Accelerating Best Management Practices (BMP) implementation for water conservation and efficiency, including development of a BMP manual for specific specialty crops

C. Food Safety

Please Note: CDFA has entered into a partnership agreement with the University of California, Davis' Center for Produce Safety (CPS) to utilize the technical expertise of their grant reviewers in the area of food safety. CPS will release a separate food safety proposal solicitation. Please contact CPS at (530) 757-5777 or visit the CPS website at <http://cps.ucdavis.edu> for the solicitation timeline and proposal requirements.

II. Marketing

Within the Marketing Funding Area, there are three sub-areas, Agriculture Education/Outreach, International Trade and Market Enhancement and Promotion.

A. Agriculture Education/Outreach

Education and Outreach has always been and continues to be a fundamental cornerstone of the strength of California's agricultural system. *Educational* projects should target students of all ages, K-12 and post-secondary. *Outreach* projects typically target adult audiences – depending on the project, targets of "outreach" could be farmers, retailers or consumers.

In this Funding Area, CDFA will consider projects that improve the public's knowledge and understanding of specialty crop agriculture and its beneficial importance to the health and well-being of all Californians.

Areas of Emphasis:

- Strengthening specialty crop agricultural career technical education through access to critical job training skills for sustainable agriculture and food economies
- Promoting California specialty crops foods and strengthening the connection between specialty crop food and agriculture
- Extending science-based information to specialty crop growers and other key stakeholders
- Educating consumers about California's specialty crop foods and agriculture
- Reconnecting communities with specialty crop food production
- Educating the public about the identity and threat of invasive species to California specialty crops

B. International Trade

California's specialty crops are found in markets worldwide as California is a dominant exporter for many specialty crop items. Approximately one-third of California's specialty crops are exported and many of these products are highly

dependent upon foreign markets to sustain their economic vitality. Exports have risen more than fifty percent in the last five years.

In this Funding Area, CDFA will consider innovative projects that enhance the international marketing and trade of California's specialty crops including, but not limited to, the development and dissemination of market information and innovative marketing activities focusing on healthy eating and nutrition to international audiences.

Areas of Emphasis:

- Promoting export training and development with an emphasis on small, medium and/or new enterprises
- Supporting innovative consumer/trade promotions in foreign markets
- Advancing public/private partnerships in the international marketing of California's specialty crops
- Identifying and documenting the impact of foreign trade barriers on exports of California specialty crops
- Identifying and proposing innovative solutions that address international consumer perception barriers
- Identifying and proposing innovative solutions to transportation and storage logistics barriers in delivering California specialty crops to international markets
- Promoting specialty crops internationally under the "California" banner

C. Market Enhancement and Promotion

California's specialty crops are sold across the nation and California is a key supplier of much of the nation's fruits, vegetables, nuts and horticultural products.

In this Funding Area, CDFA will consider projects that increase or develop long-term sales and competitiveness of specialty crop products.

Areas of Emphasis

- Supporting statewide market promotion and awareness of specialty crops
- Supporting specialty crop marketing concepts that target the unique characteristics of local and regional areas such as culture, geography, history, and types of agricultural production
- Increasing customers and sales of California specialty crops at Certified Farmers' Markets
- Supporting cooperative marketing and promotions such as cross-menu promotions of specialty crops

III. Nutrition

Within the Nutrition Funding Area, there are two sub-areas, Food Security and Healthy Eating.

A. Food Security

Far too many people in California's urban, suburban and rural communities suffer from food insecurity or have poor access to healthy and nutritious foods. Malnutrition, whether manifested through hunger or obesity, compromises both individual and community health. Ensuring access to healthy foods in underserved low-income areas of California is a key strategy to improve public health. Improvements in health, increasing consumption of horticultural products, and increasing food access to healthy foods are linked.

In this Funding Area, CDFA will consider projects that improve access and consumption of specialty crops.

Areas of Emphasis:

- Increasing participation in under-utilized federal nutrition assistance programs
- Developing community and school gardens, urban farms, and other innovative projects that support local and regional food systems
- Improving access to affordable, nutritious and culturally appropriate food in ways that foster self-reliance, enhance dignity and assure environmental sustainability

B. Healthy Eating

Increasing Californians' access to and consumption of fruits, vegetables and tree nuts is a key strategy to improve human health. The health benefits of specialty crop consumption, which are well documented, include a reduced risk of chronic diseases.

In this Funding Area, CDFA will consider projects that integrate human health and nutrition with specialty crops.

Areas of Emphasis:

- Increasing consumption of specialty crops among all populations through vigorous marketing, promotion and public/private partnerships
- Comprehensive school initiatives that link cafeterias, classrooms, gardens, parents, worksites and communities with local farmers
- Developing farm-to-fork networks that include schools, worksites, retail and restaurant outlets to connect local agriculture with nearby communities

- Promoting and/ or demonstrating the health benefits of California specialty crops
- Developing a feasible Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) system to enhance the effectiveness of purchasing specialty crops at Certified Farmers' Markets

REVIEW CRITERIA AND PROCESS

Review Criteria:

CDFA's intent is to fund projects that can produce the highest degree of measurable benefits to California specialty crop producers in relation to each dollar spent. Applicants' Concept Proposals will be evaluated on the criteria set forth in the Concept Proposal Review Criteria.

Process:

CDFA will conduct at least two levels of review during the Concept Proposal review process. The first level is an Administrative Review to determine whether Request for Concept Proposal requirements are met, and if applicable, assess an applicant's past CDFA grant performance. The second level is a Technical Review to evaluate the merits of the Concept Proposals.

The CDFA SCBGP Technical Review Committee (Technical Review Committee) will perform the Technical Review. The Technical Review Committee is made up of growers, industry, universities, public agencies and representatives from non-profits with an interest and expertise in specialty crop food and agricultural systems. Depending on the nature of the Concept Proposal, CDFA may seek additional technical peer review for more specialized proposals.

SOLICITATION PROCESS

CDFA's competitive solicitation process is divided into two phases:

- Phase I, Concept Proposal
- Phase II, Grant Proposal

Phase I, Concept Proposal:

In Phase I, applicants submit Concept Proposals for projects that enhance the competitiveness of California's specialty crops. Applicants will use an electronic submission system to respond to a series of questions regarding their organization and their project.

Phase II, Grant Proposal:

Applicants will be ***invited*** to participate in Phase II, Grant Proposal. CDFA will advise *all* applicants whether or not they are invited to submit a Grant Proposal.

In Phase II, invited applicants will submit a Grant Proposal based on the Concept Proposal submitted under Phase I. The Grant Proposal will fully describe the project, measurable outcomes, a list of grant partners and match documentation.

Specific requirements and instructions for submitting Grant Proposals will be included in the Invitation to Participate letter.

HOW TO SUBMIT CONCEPT PROPOSALS

Electronic Submittal:

CDFA has entered into a service agreement with the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) to host a web-based Concept and Grant Proposal solicitation process.

All applicants must register and receive a logon account to the Financial Assistance Application Submittal Tool (FAAST) in order to submit Concept and Grant Proposals. FAAST can be accessed on the CDFA website at: www.cdfa.ca.gov/grants. FAAST can also be accessed through the SWRCB website at: <https://faast.waterboards.ca.gov>.

Internet Explorer version 6.0 or above is required to utilize the FAAST system. Computer pop-up blocker software must be disabled while accessing FAAST.

The FAAST system utilizes a question and answer format. Most sections include a character limit. The result of this limitation is that Concept Proposals will be up to three (3) pages in length. Applicants should be prepared to respond to the following default questions from the FAAST system:

1. Submitting Organization

The Legal Name of the Organization submitting the project.

2. Project Title

The title of the project should be clear, concise and as brief as is reasonably possible.

3. Project Description

An overview of the project should be provided in this section.

4. Applicant Details

This includes the applicant organization name and address. The applicant organization and submitting organization should be the same. Please provide the address where hard copies of all official documents will be mailed.

5. Project Budget

The project budget includes the amount of funds requested and the anticipated matching funds.

Applicants must also respond to the following questions based on USDA and CDFA requirements for the 2010 SCBGP:

1. Organization Type

Select the organization type that correctly reflects the nature of your organization.

2. Funding Area

Please choose the funding area with the closest match to the nature of the project. Select a single funding area.

3. Project Purpose

Clearly identify the specific issue or problem that the project will address, and explain why the issue is relevant.

4. Prior-Year SCBGP Projects

If the project builds on a SCBGP project that was approved in a prior year, please provide the Grant Agreement number, and clearly explain how the new project compliments the previous work.

5. Potential Impact

Clearly and concisely explain who the beneficiaries of the project will be, how many people or organizations will benefit from the project and how the beneficiaries will be affected. If available and relevant, provide the potential economic impact of the project in general terms.

6. Measurable Outcome

Describe at least one distinct, quantifiable and measurable outcome-oriented objective that directly and meaningfully supports the project purpose.

7. Work Plan

Briefly describe the activities that will be performed to accomplish the objectives of the project including the beginning and end dates of the project. The Work Plan should only reflect the grant funded activities and not activities funded with match.

The FFAST system is the only acceptable method for applicants to submit Concept Proposals. CDFA strongly encourages all applicants to submit Concept Proposals in advance of the due date to allow sufficient time to complete the process in FFAST and avoid any unforeseen technical issues.

ASSISTANCE AND QUESTIONS

During the week of January 11, 2010, CDFA will conduct Specialty Crop Block Grant Workshops on the 2010 SCBGP solicitation process, use of the FFAST system and grant writing tips. Please see the CDFA web site at www.cdfa.ca.gov/grants for times and locations.

A web seminar will also be conducted on January 11, 2010 from 10:00 am until 12:00 pm. The web seminar PowerPoint presentation will be made available on the CDFA web site on January 12, 2010.

E-mail all questions about the solicitation process to: grants@cdfa.ca.gov. Responses to all questions received during the Grant Workshops, web seminar or by e-mail will be posted to the CDFA web site according to the following schedule:

Questions Received by:

1/19/10 – 5:00 PM PDT
1/25/10 – 5:00 PM PDT
1/28/10 – 5:00 PM PDT

Responses Posted by:

1/21/10 – 5:00 PM PDT
1/26/10 – 5:00 PM PDT
1/29/10 – 5:00 PM PDT

January 28, 2010 at 5:00 PM PDT is the final deadline to submit questions for the Concept Proposal phase.

In order to maintain the integrity of the competitive grant process, CDFA is unable to advise and/or provide individuals with any information regarding specific proposals during the solicitation process.

The SWRCB web site at: <https://faast.waterboards.ca.gov>, contains a Frequently Asked Questions section and a User's Manual for the FFAST system. If after reading the information available on the web site, you have questions about the FFAST System, please contact FFAST customer service at (866) 434-1083, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. or contact the SWRCB staff via e-mail at: faast_admin@waterboards.ca.gov.

Feedback

CDFA will provide feedback to all applicants who were not selected for funding under the 2010 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program once the solicitation process is complete.